

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

South Toe River Trip

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

We put our boats in Yancey County's South Toe River at a small sandy beach amidst the abutments of the highway 19 bridge.

We paddled from there to the river's confluence with the North Toe River, a trip of several hours, through one of the most remote sections of river in Western North Carolina. There's going to be a wastewater treatment plant built along this stretch of river. All the environmental review has been done, the permits are in place – it's simply a matter of time. The trip was a search for sites with healthy numbers of endangered Appalachian elktoe mussels. With sites identified, the Fish & Wildlife Service will begin a multi-year monitoring effort to quantify any impacts on the mussel resulting from the plant's construction and operation.

Mussels were found, sites were identified – as anticipated. However, what marked the trip wasn't that we had accomplished our mission. What marked the trip was the incredible beauty of the river. The South Toe River has a reputation among area biologists as one of the cleanest, healthiest rivers of its size around. It's the river you hope for. The river you plunge into during the heat of the day without concern about contamination. The river that's just undeveloped enough to give you the sensation of paddling through a wilderness.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.